

From Some Place on Earth

Updates and Writings from Political
Persecution



Oaxaca
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Eloxochitlán de Flores Magón, Oax.

* Introduction

This fanzine is a product of the work and solidarity of a network of individuals and collectives who have engaged in support, accompaniment, and complicity over the years in the ongoing struggle for the freedom of Indigenous Mazatec anarchist Miguel Peralta Betanzos and the community of Eloxochitlán de Flores Magón, Oaxaca.

It is also an expression of the relations of mutual aid, friendship, and affinity that take shape among prisoners, persecuted peoples, and those who accompany them, in the processes of antiauthoritarian struggle against prison and persecution.

Lastly, this fanzine is a small gesture of anarchist solidarity with Eloxochitlán de Flores Magón, and Indigenous peoples throughout the world, who are facing constant attacks from the State and capital.

Let this fanzine serve as a tool for thought, discussion, debate, and action. We encourage everyone to share it widely and freely.

Fire to the prisons and the society that needs them!

Solidarity with Miguel Peralta and the people of Eloxochitlán de Flores Magón.

1) New Arrest Warrant Issued Against Indigenous Anarchist Miguel Peralta

Another arrest warrant has been issued against Miguel Peralta Betanzos, ex-political prisoner and anarchist, after being released in October 2019, having survived over four years in prison.

Miguel Peralta, originally from the community of Eloxochitlán de Flores Magón in the Sierra Mazateca of Oaxaca, is once again the target of political repression by representatives of the state in his region, who seek to return him to prison on fabricated charges. Miguel, together with 34 other people—seven of whom today remain in prison—was persecuted, processed, and imprisoned in Oaxaca for charges of homicide and attempted homicide. These fabricated charges were brought by the cacique family of his community who today are involved in the highest political spheres at both the state and national level, being active members of the political party in power.

Coinciding with that escalation of political power, in March 2022, after more than two years since being released, a new court reopened his case file and again

Comunicado from the Support Group in Solidarity with Miguel Peralta denouncing the revocation of his freedom and the new order of arrest ordered against him (August 2022).

ordered his arrest. He is to be detained and imprisoned in Oaxaca for fifty years, in whichever prison has space for him. This same conviction was already judicially and politically dismantled, when his release was ordered in October 2019.

With this act, the political party that sustains power in Mexico reaffirms the political persecution against Miguel and other Indigenous people who defend their own forms of organization against a system of political parties occupied by cacique groups in Oaxaca. These cacique-political party groups work in complicity with the state and national justice system. Those who have already taken away four years of his freedom now want to take away fifty more.

It is worth mentioning that after Miguel's release, he has continued denouncing the fabrication of crimes and unjust imprisonment of his seven imprisoned compañeros of Eloxochitlán, as well as the outstanding arrest warrants against others. He has not remained silent in the face of the carceral system, nor has he returned home to live peacefully and ignore the situation that his compañerxs are going through. For us, this is the clear reason for which the powerful consider it "necessary" and instructive that he returns to prison.

Neither do we omit that it is precisely prolonged imprisonment that states use as a strategy to combat their enemies. In the case of Mexico, incarceration is

clearly oriented toward locking up land defenders and community organizers on one hand, and women who struggle against the patriarchal state on the other.

Globally, the persecution against anarchists is demonstrated with long-term prison sentences, as is the case of the compañerxs in Italy who were recently sentenced, or the case of Gabriel Pombo da Silva, who was also returned to prison because it was considered that he still didn't fulfill his debt to the Spanish State. This is just to mention a couple cases.

For all of this, we again call on the solidarity which has accompanied us for all these years, to speak out against the fifty-year sentence and the political persecution against Miguel being carried out by the political party apparatus currently in power. We call on everyone to denounce the arrest warrant issued against him, and to demand the immediate freedom of the seven political prisoners of Eloxochitlán, along with the revocation of the arrest warrants against those displaced from their community due to the same conflict.

We ask everyone to be attentive to any attempt to arrest Miguel, or to do harm to him, his family, or lawyers.

Recognizing the context of impunity and criminalization in Oaxaca and the country as a whole, we hold responsible Elisa Zepeda Lagunas, and her father Manuel Zepeda Cortés, along with their entire

cacique-political party group, for the political persecution, harassment, and repression unleashed against Miguel with this new sentence.

The amount of years in his sentence reflect the viciousness of persecution against those who struggle, filling us with rage and the courage to not give up.

Prisoners to the street!

#LibresYa

Support Group in Solidarity with Miguel Peralta
Betanzos



2) Message from Miguel Peralta from Some Place on Earth

Limited, behind these invisible bars, in this universal cell, with guards embedded in the cell phones, street posts, and public transportation...that stealthily watch and mark our steps, but that do not control our consciousness and much less our raging heart. Here I am with my hands tied by this new 50-year prison sentence, which limits me from continuing to shout for and demand with you all the immediate freedom of my uncle, my friends, and my imprisoned compas of Eloxochitlán de Flores Magón and the world.

We've been getting to know each other traveling this difficult road, each one with their own fire, permanently on the barricade. We share the impotence, anguish, loneliness, rage, solidarity, and true essence of freedom. Reconstructing with bits and pieces of hugs and smiles that the wind carries and brings.

I send my greetings to all the compas who are making these activities possible: the conversations and mobilizations. May our voices continue to spread

Transcription of an audio message from Miguel Peralta for the activities of “Freedom and Resistance” and the radio transmissions from the space of Radio Zapote in Mexico City (November 2022).

throughout spaces of resistance, where there is solidarity, so that we can snatch back our freedom.

With much love I embrace the student community, the teachers, and the workers who resist in the ENAH. And of course, the compas of Radio Zapote who have always had our back; all those who made these gatherings possible; the participants in the conversations, discussions, laughter, and disgust; those who showed their solidarity by purchasing something; those who listened and attended the radio transmissions. I send you all a strong embrace.

I think that beyond the acts of complicity, there are other positive aspects that we are forgetting about. The redeemable thing about this situation is that we don't have the classic question that people ask you when you are in jail, "How do you feel? What are you doing?" to which I answered: "Well, I'm gaining seniority, don't you know?" Of course, the situation itself warranted the question. To be a bit sarcastic about all the symbolic elements that make up the shitty penitentiary system that we spit out even in our dreams, or even with our dreams. Well, now we ask ourselves the anticipated question of what will happen? Everything is so uncertain. In this long journey we have taught ourselves to be, to some extent, unsure. In the same way paranoia does its thing and starts to plow our mind, sowing that ugly feeling of danger. To be alert to everything that moves around us. Now it is

different because the fences are colorful, now they are disguised as gardens and the walls are transparent. What does not change are the checkpoints, the gates. We normalize them so fast that we immediately take out our IDs. Ten steps back and we are already preparing the tray.

On this long road, which we did not decide to walk of our own free will but which we were forced to walk, we have taken very slow steps because of the weight of this burden of absence, reactions, actions, ideas, sadness, misunderstandings, feelings, illnesses, nightmares, anger—but the important thing is that we are unlearning from everything we experience at every moment. From that sigh from the deepest part of our heart that carries with it a little piece of fire and hope, putting into practice the blessed common sense. The one that shouts at you and in its echo repeats from the emptiness, don't you blink.

When you are facing persecution, uncertainty becomes the main course of every day. The uncertainty of not being able to look each other in the eyes and the constant desire to communicate, to know we are free, to talk about something or nothing at the same time, without a plot or political agenda, but above all, human. To know that we are alive, that we live during a slow moment stalking the night with the owls, inhaling stardust, drinking seas of solitude, watching

every night how the stars sprout, how the leaves dry and the wind transports them to their destination.

Arriving at a place and always looking for alternate exits. Passing through police checkpoints, always on the lookout because they will surely ask for identification. With that fucked up emotion of “they are going to catch me” and giving strength to my feet to run without stopping like a Rarámuri person. Looking for freedom in every step, day and night. That fear of talking to strangers and the anxiety of doing so merely to communicate. To be sure that I breathe and that I can have the power to feel, to go beyond that reality. To tell half stories, like this one, similar to my experiences, to change my name, to learn a number by heart, an address and how to get there in case I come back someday. We don’t know what destiny has in store for us, but we have to start tracing it out, because I don’t believe in the future. Is that a contradiction?

There is a very strange emptiness. A desolate environment, not at all habitable, that is inside my being. That feeling of missing everything at the same time: my partner, my family, my friends, my acquaintances and so on... I can’t continue any further, but... I appreciate you all, thank you for listening to me. See you soon.

Cheers and anarchy,

Miguel Peralta



3) Neither Condemned, Nor Persecuted: Call for Actions in Solidarity with Miguel Peralta

A half-century is what state and judicial power seek to take from the life of our compañero, Miguel Peralta Betanzos, Indigenous Mazatec of Eloxochitlán de Flores Magón, Oaxaca. The state seeks his imprisonment, to criminalize his struggle for self-determination, against local political bosses who have crushed this Indigenous community with domination rooted in political parties, governmental positions, and the dispossession of community resources.

The accusations against Miguel Peralta are derived from a socio-political conflict in the Indigenous municipality of Eloxochitlán de Flores Magón. Miguel is accused of two crimes that have been fabricated against him. For these crimes he was given a sentence of fifty years, and imprisoned for nearly five years. In October 2019, after a burdensome and lengthy legal process, it was proven that there is no evidence to convict him and he was granted his freedom. For the same conflict, for eight years and four months, six compañeros from the community have remained in

Commuque from the Support Group in Solidarity with Miguel Peralta calling for solidarity actions for the revocation of his fifty-year prison sentence (April 2023).

prison without sentences, and fourteen others from the community are being persecuted.

On March 4, 2022, the State Superior Court of Oaxaca revoked Miguel Peralta's freedom, issuing an arrest warrant against him and again imposing a fifty-year sentence. Against this sentence and political persecution, we call on everyone to mobilize within the framework of the "Neither Condemned, Nor Persecuted. Actions for Freedom" to demand Judge Elizabeth Franco Cervantes resolve the appeal filed by Los Otros Abogados (Miguel's solidarity legal defense team) with a sentence of freedom. We demand that the judge do so within the legal time frame they have to resolve the appeal. That is to say, by the month of June.

Some ways in which people might express their solidarity according to their specific geographies, spaces, and forms are: join the demand for Miguel's freedom with letters directed to the judge in charge of resolving the appeal; protests in Mexican embassies or other governmental offices; hanging banners; forums to spread the word about the legal situation; political-cultural activities; videos or photos; artwork; or any other actions that you can think of. We call on people to demand Miguel Peralta's freedom and an end to the continued persecution he is experiencing from the cacique-political party family of Eloxochitlán, in collusion with the political party that currently holds state and federal power.

We ask that you share your actions with us at the following email: yalibreselox@riseup.net

The amount of years in his sentence reflects the viciousness of the persecution against those who struggle, filling us with rage and the courage not to give up! End the political persecution! Down with all prison walls! Free the prisoners! We want them in the streets! #LibresYa

Group in Solidarity with Miguel Peralta Betanzos



4) Resolution Pending in Case of Miguel Peralta Betanzos

Miguel Peralta's freedom hangs in the balance. Indigenous Mazatec, community organizer, anarchist, Peralta is one of thirty-five members of the community assembly of Eloxochitlán de Flores Magón who have faced political persecution and/or imprisonment following violence in the Indigenous Mazatec municipality in 2014.

On December 14 of that year, a campaign of cacique repression and terror came to a head when the community assembly was attacked by an armed group as they gathered to elect a municipal authority in the town center. The ensuing violence left various people injured, and shortly thereafter, one person was pronounced dead in uncertain circumstances.

The repression immediately followed. Thirty-five members of the community assembly were charged with different crimes related to that day's events. The charges don't correspond to those responsible for the violence, but rather signal out those who have actively participated in the community assembly, resisting

Article published by Avispa Midia during the wait for the court's resolution on the appeal against the 50-year sentence against Miguel Peralta (June 2023).

cacique and political party influence, and fighting for autonomy and collective decision-making.

Currently, eight members of the community assembly remain imprisoned in different prisons in the state of Oaxaca: Herminio Monfil, Jaime Betanzos, Fernando Gavito, Alfredo Bolaños, Omar Morales, Francisco Durán, Marcelino Miramón, and Paul Reyes, the majority of whom have been held for years without a sentence. In addition, thirteen active arrest warrants against members of the community assembly remain, including one against Miguel Peralta, who has already received a condemnatory sentence of fifty years in prison.

Imprisonment and Persecution of Miguel Peralta:

As an active member of the community assembly, and a vocal opponent of the cacique-political party influence in Eloxochitlán, Miguel Peralta was swept up in the wave of repression following the events on December 14. Peralta was detained on April 30, 2015 in Mexico City, nearly five months after the attack in December 2014. He was held incommunicado for nearly 20 hours before eventually being booked in Tlaxiaco, Oaxaca on charges of homicide and attempted homicide. From Tlaxiaco he was transferred to the prison in Cuicatlán, Oaxaca.

On October 26, 2018, after over three years in prison awaiting a verdict, Miguel Peralta was sentenced to

fifty years, thirty for homicide and twenty for attempted homicide. The sentence was handed down by Judge Juan Leon Montiel of the Mixed District Court of Huautla de Jiménez, Oaxaca, in what Miguel Peralta's support group has argued to be a clear case of judicial corruption. He was the first of the thirty-five charged from Eloxochitlán to actually receive a condemnatory sentence.

Following an appeal from his legal team, that fifty-year sentence was thrown out as Peralta was not afforded his right to be present at his final hearing. Miguel's second final hearing was held on September 19, 2019. That day he released a statement launching a hunger strike demanding his freedom:

“Once again I use my body as a weapon of struggle against injustice. Starting today...I will stop consuming food. Hunger strike menu: My breakfast, a snack of patience. My lunch, a buffet of resistance. My main course, solidarity. My dessert, freedom.”

On October 14, 2019, after growing calls from the streets for his release, and almost a month without eating food, Miguel was absolved of both charges and released from prison in Cuicatlán. He had spent just over four years and four months in prison.

Over two years later, following an appeal from the accusing party, Peralta's freedom was again revoked on March 4, 2022, and an arrest warrant issued for that

same fifty-year sentence. His freedom was overturned in the Third Criminal Court, by the Magistrates Humberto Nicolás Vázquez, Sonia Luz Ireta Jiménez and Sofia Altamirano Rueda.

On August 25, 2022, his legal team filed an appeal to this latest resolution. Initially, on March 1, 2023, the appeal was assigned to Judge Elizabeth Franco Cervantes in the First Collegiate Court of the State of Oaxaca. On May 26, 2023, a new judge was appointed to the case, C. Victor Hugo Cortes Sibaja. According to the law, the judge has 90 business days to rule on the case, which puts the legal time frame to rule on the appeal sometime in the coming months.



Cacique-Political Party-State Power

The case of Eloxochitlán and Miguel Peralta exemplifies the unmistakable links between local caciques, political parties, and state power. The Zepeda family, including Manuel Zepeda Cortés and his daughter Elisa Zepeda Lagunas, have been the backbone of this force.

At the beginning of 2010, with the backing of the political party Convergence, Manuel Zepeda Cortés launched a campaign for municipal president, handing out political gifts, buying votes, and making political alliances in order to capture power. In the elections of November of that year, Zepeda won the municipal presidency with a third of the votes. Contrary to custom in the community, Zepeda refused the integration of the municipal government with the second and third place candidates, seeking supreme power in the community.

Over the course of his three-year term, Manuel Zepeda carried out a campaign of repression against members of the community assembly, seeking to disarticulate the community organization which threatened his hold on power. Zepeda was also involved in the extraction of sand, gravel, and rocks from the local river to benefit his companies, along with those of his allies. Furthermore, he left an account of more than 20 million pesos missing from municipal coffers.

On November 24, 2014, Manuel Zepeda and his group occupied the municipal palace, running out the newly elected municipal president and establishing themselves in power in the community. Their principle intention was to avoid being held accountable for the disappearance of municipal funds. The occupation of the municipal palace led directly to the attack on December 14, 2014.

Taking advantage of the political persecution against members of the community assembly, along with the disarticulation of the community fabric as a result of the repression, Elisa Zepeda Lagunas, the daughter of Manuel Zepeda Cortés, made her way into power. In a community election completely foreign to the traditional decision-making forms in the community, Zepeda was elected municipal president of Eloxochitlán in April 2016, taking power in 2017.

However, in a clear sign that her intention wasn't to serve the community of Eloxochitlán, but to use the public position as a political trampoline, Zepeda ran for state congress as local representative for the political party MORENA, winning the election in July 2018, and taking power in November of that year.

During her three years in office, Zepeda also served as President of the Permanent Commission of Justice of the State of Oaxaca. As Miguel's lawyer suggests, "In that position, Elisa had relations with the District Attorney, with the Public Prosecutors' Offices, with

judges and magistrates of the State Judicial Power.” She was rubbing shoulders with the very same people who would overturn Miguel’s freedom not long afterwards.



Following a loss in her reelection bid in June 2021, Zepeda had already established her position in the MORENA political party apparatus. She was appointed the Secretary of Women of the Salomón Jara government which took power in Oaxaca on December 1, 2022. From these various public positions, Elisa Zepeda has flexed her political power and judicial connections to maintain the repression and persecution against members of the community assembly.

The ongoing repression and persecution of members of the community assembly of Eloxochitlán de Flores Magón exemplifies not only the corruption of certain public officials, but a more general hostility of the Mexican nation-state towards Indigenous communities. Through local caciques, State power is able to disarticulate community organization, struggles for self-determination and territorial defense. And through State power, caciques acquire the economic and political resources to dominate their communities and scale the structure of state power. In this case, all these forces intersect in the figure of Elisa Zepeda, and the political party MORENA.

Neither Condemned nor Persecuted: Actions for Freedom

In April of 2023, the Support Group in Solidarity with Miguel Peralta launched a solidarity campaign, “Neither Condemned nor Persecuted: Actions for Freedom,” demanding the revocation of the fifty-year sentence against Miguel Peralta and a sentence of complete freedom. The campaign also seeks to draw attention and support to the eight remaining political prisoners of Eloxochitlán de Flores Magón, along with other struggles against prisons and state repression both nationally and across the globe.

Heeding the call for solidarity, Indigenous Yaqui political prisoner Fidencio Aldama released an audio statement from prison in Ciudad Obregón, Sonora

expressing his solidarity with Miguel Peralta. In the statement, Aldama, who is spending fourteen years in prison for resisting the construction of a natural gas pipeline in Yaqui territory, makes the connection between his case and that of Miguel Peralta's:

"In the face of this sentence and political persecution, I want to express my solidarity with my compañero Miguel Peralta, calling on everyone to resist this case of injustice. His case is similar to mine. For the defense of our territories and self-determination, our customs and traditions, they unjustly imprison us. They do so to intimidate us. Through the intervention of those in power, and the corruption linked to them, those allied with money can carry out their objectives."

Political prisoner support groups and independent media projects are organizing a collective radio transmission on June 3, 2023, with the intention of shining light on Miguel's case, and articulating different cases of political repression and persecution. That same day, Miguel Peralta's support group is calling for solidarity actions. Their message is clear: Revocation of the fifty-year sentence! Absolute freedom for Miguel Peralta!

5) Statement from Miguel Peralta for June 11: International Day of

Solidarity with Marius Mason and All Long-Term Anarchist Prisoners

Don't give up compas, resist. We are here on the outside thinking about you. We are thinking of all of you. We know how hard it is to be isolated, restricted, watched. We understand that you are fed up with the daily roll call, the ridiculous uniform, the sound of the locks, the food, the prison guards.

I want you to know that we feel the same rage for this bullshit system that separates us.

Sometimes there might not be a smile, but we can't allow them to take away our happiness. I think we are condemned the moment we set foot in prison. They separate us from our loved ones, from the natural world, from our compas, from the struggle, from the moon. Yet there is no other option than to continue resisting to tear down the walls that keep us apart.

The war that you are facing is exhausting, but only you know what that entails. You know it perfectly well. Surely you have your strategies to be free in your daily routine. Don't stop dreaming, don't get discouraged. I hope that these words cause a crack in those prison

Message from Miguel Peralta in solidarity with anarchist prisoners (June 2023).

walls so that we can listen to and read each other's words and thoughts.

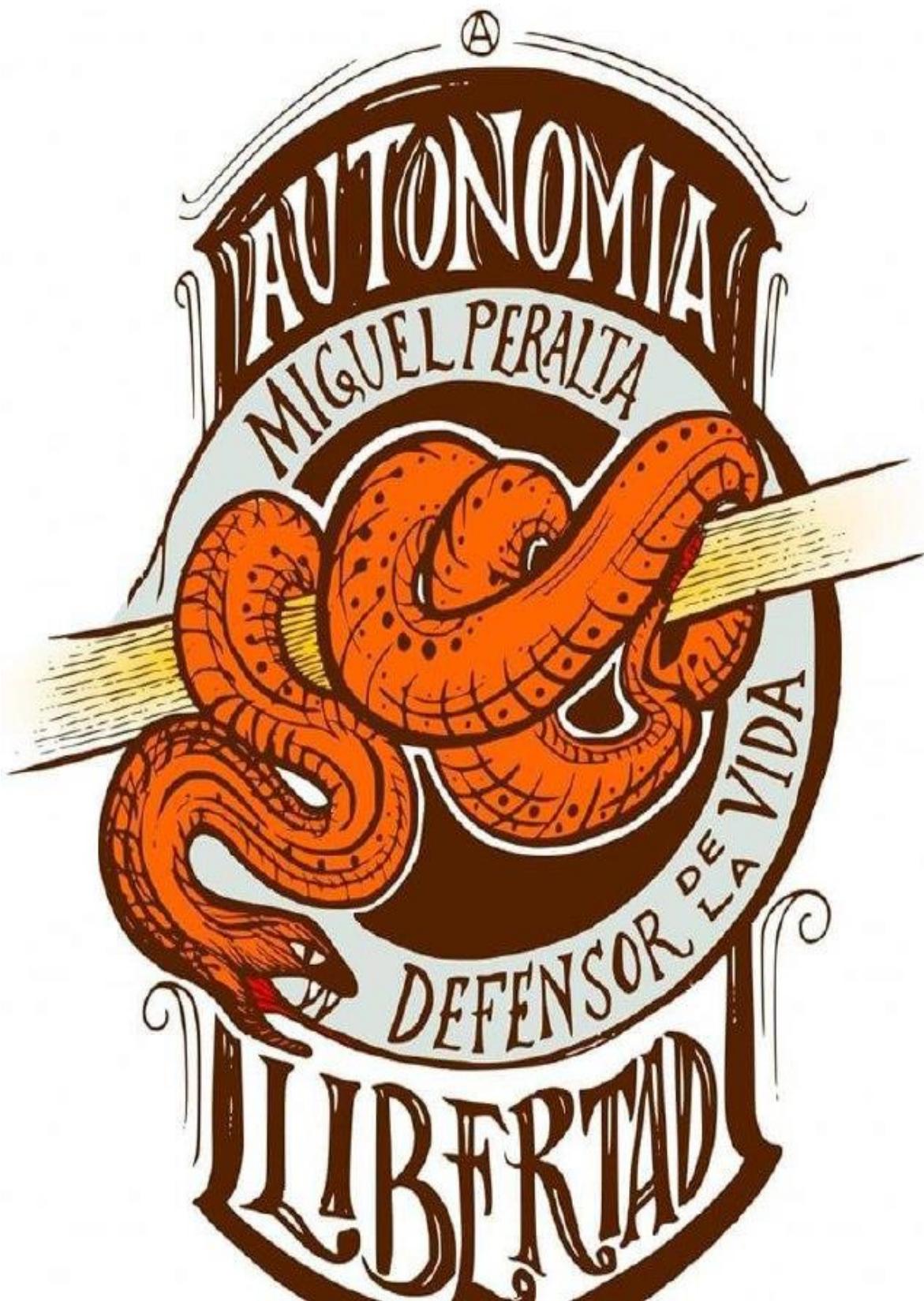
I want you to know that you are not alone. Here we are waiting for you. I send you all a warm embrace.

Freedom and anarchy!

Burn down the prison walls!

Miguel Peralta





6) Banner Drop in Oaxaca for the Week of Solidarity with Anarchist Prisoners

Today, August 30, we dropped a banner over a highway in Oaxaca in solidarity with all anarchist prisoners and those being persecuted by the state.

We want to call special attention, and send an extra strong embrace, to our compañero Miguel Peralta from the community of Eloxochitlán de Flores Magón, who is living on the run due to continued repression from the cacique-political party apparatus currently in power in the state of Oaxaca. Released in October 2019 after serving over four years in prison, Miguel's freedom was overturned in March 2022, and a warrant put out for his arrest.

We also want to mention the eight community members of Eloxochitlán de Flores Magón who remain in prison, some of whom have been kidnapped by the state for nearly nine years without a conviction or a sentence. The Indigenous Mazatec compañeros of Eloxochitlán are imprisoned for organizing and fighting for their autonomy and self-determination,

Banner drop and communique from some anarchists in Oaxaca for the Week of International Solidarity with Anarchist Prisoners (August 2023).

something for which we feel anarchists should show their solidarity and support.

We hope this humble gesture gives echo in the territories of Oaxaca to the call for a week of international solidarity with anarchist prisoners, ensuring those locked up and on the run that we are thinking about you all, and that you are not forgotten.

Much love and respect for those imprisoned for defending the earth, for fighting fascism and hate, for resisting state repression and violence, for organizing community self-defense, for struggling for autonomy and liberation.

Free the anarchist prisoners! Free all prisoners!

Autonomy for the Indigenous peoples!

Solidarity with Miguel Peralta!

Some anarchists in the valleys of Oaxaca



7) Letter from Miguel Peralta Following the Resolution to the Appeal of His 50-year Sentence

While the justice system continues acting as if it is independent and in defense of peoples' rights, the expansion of cacique power continues at all costs, seeking to silence the voices of those who organize.

Recently we were notified of another legal decision in my case which adds to the ongoing legal charade and reaffirms the political interference being carried out by the current Secretary of Women in the state of Oaxaca, Elisa Zepeda Lagunas. From the use and abuse of her political position, she seeks to roll back the long legal process already traced by the prisoners and persecuted of Elochochitlán de Flores Magón.

In August 2022, my legal team Los Otros Abogados filed an appeal against my sentence demonstrating once again the repeated contradictions and fabrication of evidence in the legal file 02/2015. The recent legal decision was made without considering the merits of the case.

Furthering the simulation of justice, the magistrates decided to return my legal process to the presentation

Letter from Miguel Peralta after the court issued a decision on the appeal to his 50-year sentence (September 2023).

of evidence stage, with the supposed purpose of carrying out cross-examinations between me and the six witnesses, puppets of Elisa Zepeda and her father Manuel Zepeda Cortés.

What this means is a setback of at least seven years of my legal process, and the continued insistence on my imprisonment.

It is important to remember that one of the puppets of Elisa Zepeda admitted that in 2014, they did not give their testimony before the public prosecutor, but were only asked for their signature; another puppet refused to appear to testify; in order to get Manuel Zepeda and his brother to present themselves for testimony, the date had to be set on the same day that they had to go to the district court in Huautla de Jiménez in order to sign for another legal case in which they were being prosecuted; and finally, Elisa Zepeda and two of her other puppets managed to delay their testimonies for over a year.

Within this context, in addition to the power that Elisa Zepeda currently holds in the state government of Oaxaca, it is impossible to speak of a fair trial under equal conditions, when for nearly nine years since the socio-political conflict in Eloxochitlán de Flores Magón took place, the persecution, incarceration, repression, and interference of power have only escalated.

Faced with this scenario of the fabrication of crimes in order to continue the political persecution seeking my return to prison, I call on everyone to strengthen the solidarity in the demand for the unconditional freedom of all the prisoners and persecuted of Eloxochitlán de Flores Magón, Oaxaca.

Let us ignite our fury until we are all free.

We want us in the streets!

Freedom for the political prisoners!

Miguel Peralta Betanzos



8) Court Order Threatens Freedom of Former Mazatec Political Prisoner

The ruling on an appeal filed by the legal defense team of the former Mazatec political prisoner, Miguel Peralta, seeking to overturn his conviction, has once again put his freedom at risk. A member of the community assembly of Eloxochitlán de Flores Magón, Oaxaca, Peralta is one of 35 assembly members who have been persecuted, accused of the homicide of Manuel Zepeda Lagunas, and the attempted homicide of his sister, Elisa Zepeda, both members of the same Mazatec community.

The root of what Peralta's lawyer argues is criminalization, are the violent events which took place in December of 2014, when the community assembly was attacked by an armed group. Community members clarify that the armed group was beneath the command of the Zepeda cacique family.

Members of the community assembly explain that since 2010, when Elisa's father, Manuel Zepeda Cortés, became municipal president, he began a campaign of repression against the community organization in

Article published by Aldo Santiago of Avispa Midia interviewing Los Otros Abogadoz about the resolution to the appeal in the case of Miguel Peralta (September 2023).

order to consolidate his power in the Mazatec community.

Roberto López, member of the collective Los Otros Abogadoz, and Peralta's lawyer, says that while the assembly gathered in the center of town for the election of municipal authorities that winter of 2014, shots were fired at the assembly from the municipal building, where Elisa and Manuel Zepeda had previously installed themselves.

The attack left people with gunshot wounds, provoking the death of Elisa's brother, Manuel Zepeda Lagunas. Manuel had been detained by inhabitants of Eloxochitlán while wielding a weapon designated exclusively for military use, and was being turned over to the authorities. "Unfortunately for them, he died. In that moment, instead of turning him over to the authorities, these inhabitants of Eloxochitlán were accused of being responsible for the homicide," says the lawyer.

According to his legal defense, although Peralta was in Mexico City on the day of the events, he was accused of homicide, arbitrarily detained, and transferred to Oaxaca. Peralta was in prison for more than four years until October 2019, when he was freed.

However, his sentence of freedom was overturned in March 2022. After an appeal filed by the accusing party, a new arrest warrant was issued against him to

serve a sentence of fifty years in prison. Against that, Peralta's legal defense team filed an appeal for due process violations and the fabrication of evidence.

On August 17, a federal collegiate tribunal ruled on the appeal, which Roberto López argues exacerbates the legal situation of the former political prisoner. “They turned us back seven years in time,” explains the lawyer. He specifies that the process was returned to the stage before the sentencing, to the presentation of evidence and cross-examinations.

“They returned the legal process to where the other prisoners currently stand (in reference to the other political prisoners of Eloxochitlán), those who have not received a conviction or a sentence...because the magistrates didn't seriously study the issue, they only dealt with a superficial issue (redoing the testimonies). While they disguise this as addressing a due process violation, in reality, the intention is to continue giving control of the process to Elisa,” says Peralta’s lawyer.

López asserts that throughout the legal process, Manuel and Elisa Zepeda have used a strategy of delay, managing the conflict and maintaining “hostage” the other prisoners from the events of 2014.

The danger, the lawyer accentuates, is that in order to return to that part of the process, Peralta would have to face detention. “What this means is a setback of at least seven years of my legal process, and the continued

insistence on my imprisonment," claimed the Mazatec through a letter shared last week. For this reason, the legal defense filed another appeal for a review of the most recent resolution, with the intention of having the Supreme Court resolve the appeal, which could happen in the next four to five months.

Below, we share extracts from a conversation we had with Roberto López, who warns that the persecution against Peralta is intensifying.

Alto a la criminalización contra Miguel Peralta Betanzos.



Avispa Midia (AM): With the recent resolution, which part of the process is being reinstated?

Roberto López (RL): The resolution returned us to the cross-examination stage...a part of the process where they refused to attend. If they do not appear, we will have to wait until they do so, in order for them to give their testimonies and be cross-examined. The conclusions will then be presented, the final hearing will take place, and a new sentence will be issued. I am not exaggerating when I say that this ruling turns us back approximately seven years in time. They continue to control the conflict. With this resolution, the collegiate tribunal gives Elisa the power to continue controlling the process.

The events took place on December 14, 2014. To begin presenting evidence, one of the first hearings didn't take place until January 30, 2017. Manuel and Vicente Zepeda were present only because they had a hearing as defendants for acts that the community assembly had denounced, injuries and torture, taken up by the public prosecutor's office.

Elisa was counseled and her lawyers recommended that she not present herself at the court to give her testimony. The court was never willing to fine or arrest her for not appearing. The court never did anything. Finally, on September 30, 2017, she and three other witnesses presented themselves to give their testimonies.

AM: What are the principal contradictions in the testimonies that were not taken up in the most recent resolution?

RL: When we presented the appeal in 2022, we highlighted the testimonies against Miguel, which are an essential part of the process. The testimony of Elisa Zepeda, of her father, and of the seven witnesses who accuse Miguel. That is the fundamental part that must be questioned. In fact, these testimonies were already put in doubt during the process. In emphasizing the contradictions in these testimonies, other codefendants of Miguel have been freed.

We did an analysis of what Elisa Zepeda and the witnesses first said to the public prosecutor, and what they said in the hearings before the court. They were different things, contradictory statements.

There was a witness, Eleazar Hernández Ordaz, an old man, who in the legal file accuses Miguel. His testimony is a carbon copy of the testimony given by Manuel Zepeda, the father of Elisa. In court, when it was his turn to give his testimony, he explained that he never gave the aforementioned testimony. They show him the testimony. “Is this your signature?” “Yes, that is my signature, but I don’t remember.” Fernando Ramírez Carrera, another witness, says that he never gave any testimony. His signature appears, but he says he never gave testimony to the public prosecutor.

Elisa's uncle, Vicente Zepeda, says that throughout that day's events, he was with Elisa. She gives extensive testimony with many details. Details that Vicente doesn't give. And when he is questioned in the hearing, seeing that there were many things in her testimony that he had not mentioned, he says, "I saw them when they entered, but they hit me on the head, and I lost consciousness. I fainted and I don't remember anything else," so as to not contradict Elisa's testimony.

Everyone will maintain the same testimonies and we will go to sentencing. This will not change the resolution to come. When Elisa reiterates the accusation, her witnesses will obviously say that they recognize Peralta, that they saw him in the location of the acts, and that will lead to a conviction. That, in turn, will again lead us to an appeal.

AM: What elements do you consider to be decisive in the recent ruling on the appeal?

RL: The events took place in 2014. From there, Elisa began to construct a discourse of victimhood. She approaches some human rights organizations and they support her as a defender of women's rights. Like that she moves her way up to municipal presidency of Eloxochitlán. She is president for one year, before she renounces her position in order to run for local representative of the 64th legislature of the State Congress. She wins with the political party MORENA.

During her three years as local representative, she is named president of the Permanent Commission of Justice of the State of Oaxaca. This means that she is in charge of naming judges, magistrates, local prosecutors. She begins to have relations with people from the state prosecutor's office, those who prosecute, and people from judicial power, those who sentence. From my perspective she weaves together these networks and alliances.

All this makes possible that in 2022, Miguel's sentence of freedom is overturned. There have already been many resolutions freeing other prisoners of Eloxoxtitlán and very few of those resolutions of freedom have been overturned. Miguel's was overturned. For me, this is a consequence of her position of political power, maintaining alliances with those who hold judicial power.

Then comes Salomón Jara's campaign for governor. She joins his team and is named Secretary of Women, a secretary in the government of Salomón Jara. From that position, she continues utilizing the resources she has, continues utilizing her political power, to influence the situation.

For us, she influenced the resolution of the collegiate circuit tribunal which ruled on Miguel's appeal. It was there because the appeal sought his freedom for all the violations, for all the precedent. And no, on the contrary, they turn us back seven years in the process.

With that, we know that this is more than legal, it is political. Elisa Zepeda has utilized the death of her brother to maintain power, to climb the political ladder. She doesn't want her discourse to collapse because if it does, it will show that everything she has constructed, her entire political trajectory, was a lie.

From that position of power, she is confronting the prisoners of Eloxochitlán. Those who are still in prison, and those being persecuted, as is the case of Miguel...she continues with this thirst for revenge against the prisoners, because if they are all released, her discourse collapses.



AM: What is the response to the recent ruling?

RL: We analyzed it and we said no, this is a set-up. They want Miguel to return to prison under the pretext that they are reinstating the process so that he can be cross-examined alongside Elisa. That resolution doesn't help us. Thus, we have sought that the Supreme Court review the ruling on the appeal. Let the justices determine if that appeal was properly ruled upon, and if the resolution is correct.

We want the Supreme Court to review the resolution to the appeal and rule on the fundamental violations that exist in this process. Among them are false accusations of Elisa and her witnesses, accusations that have already been questioned, and have already been put in doubt. There are resolutions which released other codefendants. There are resolutions, including in the chambers of the Supreme Court of the State of Oaxaca, also of district courts, where they say that the testimonies of Elisa and her witnesses are not credible. There are contradictions, there are inconsistencies, and we want the Supreme Court to not evade their responsibility. The issue of these political prisoners is a significant issue for society. We cannot allow that by means of political power, a person is influencing the legal process, falsely accusing those who oppose the cacique project of her family.

With the contradictions of the witnesses and the delay in the legal process, we have a lot of partisanship to

face in the courts. Adding to the contradictions, are the judges, the court clerks, the public prosecutor, who in the nine years of this process, has been the same. Judges have been changed, court clerks have been changed, but the public prosecutor, who began the process, continues there because they are a key figure for Elisa Zepeda, for Manuel Zepeda.

It is very important for society that the Supreme Court review this appeal. If the Supreme Court rejects us, we would be practically proving that access to justice in this country continues to not exist. Because in the end, the pathway to justice would be closed off. They need to take up their responsibility, to demonstrate the independence between judicial and government power. We have faced an unequal process, with many irregularities, partisanship, and many contradictions in the testimonies of the witnesses. More than being legal, this conflict is political, and it is being managed by Elisa Zepeda in the manner that she pleases. Nine years and there is no sentence for anybody. Nearly nine years of this legal process without a sentence. I think that is significant, and whatever honest, impartial judge who observes that would have to order their release.

ALTO A LA
PERSEGUICIÓN
POLÍTICA!



MIGUEL PERALTA



LIBERTAD!

9) Words from Miguel Peralta in Solidarity with the Prisoners of Eloxochitlán

Greetings compas. Herminio, Jaime, Alfredo, Fernando. and Francisco, from the other prison, from persecution. Hoping that today you achieve your freedom without any more chains, to be able to walk freely in the streets. Paul and Marcelino, I also hope that you soon recuperate your freedom and that all of those being persecuted can return to our *Naxinanda*. To our community.

Being in prison, at every moment having to put up with the prison guards, the bad food, the scarce access to healthcare, the poorly paid work, the limited time for visits, the need for recreational spaces, the absence of the mountains, land, water, plants, animals, homemade food, family, is an act of continuous struggle.

Waiting for a hearing from inside prison can be a bombardment of emotions. There are occasions when you feel your hands are tied because freedom depends on the reach of the corruption.

Transcription of an audio from Miguel Peralta demanding the freedom of his compañeros from Eloxochitlán de Flores Magón on the day of their hearing, September 18, in Huautla de Jiménez, Oaxaca (September 2023).

If you aren't present at your hearing, you want to be communicating at every moment to know what is happening. You want to be sure that the hearing is taking place, that the judge, the secretary, or the public prosecutor are not going to come up with some new bullshit excuse to postpone the hearing, that they finally run out of tricks to keep us imprisoned.

Let today be that day when their set-up comes to an end, and the puppets of power have no more strings to hold them up. Compas, we demand your freedom now. We want you all in the streets.

Free the political prisoners! End the political persecution!

Miguel Peralta



10) Letter from Miguel Peralta in Solidarity with Manuel Gómez, Tzeltal Political Prisoner

We join in the call for the freedom of Manuel Gómez Vásquez. He has a hearing scheduled for November 14. After almost three years in prison, he shouldn't spend another minute locked up. Manuel Gómez Vásquez is another hostage of the Mexican State, which disguises itself as "progressive" and continues biting its tongue having our compa, and many others, kidnapped for struggling for self-determination and territorial defense.

Enough of the fabrication of crimes!

We want you in the streets!

Immediate freedom for Manuel Gómez Vázquez!

Down with the prison walls!

Miguel Peralta

Letter from Miguel Peralta demanding freedom for Tzeltal political prisoner and Zapatista, Manuel Gómez, for his hearing November 14, 2023 in Chiapas. Manuel Gómez was freed just two days later on November 16 (November 2023).

MIGUEL PERALTA



LIBERTAD

11) Letter from Miguel Peralta 101 Years Since the Assassination of Ricardo Flores Magón

What's up, compas? I greet you all with much love. First, I would like to ask for a strong applause for Angelita Velasco, Genero Vargas, and Alberto Cabanzo...compañerxs who've left this world and who were part of this struggle.

One-hundred and one years since the assassination of Ricardo Flores Magón, the seed of rebellion that he sowed continues bearing fruits of knowledge, ideas, anecdotes, and strategies of resistance. In spite of the constant political imprisonment and persecution he faced, including outside of Mexico, he always maintained a firm and clear ideological posture, something necessary for us to remember.

Reclaiming Ricardo means strengthening ties of community, and a sense of belonging that the powerful can never eliminate.

I want to send a strong embrace to my uncle Jaime Betanzos and Herminio Monfil who have managed to

Letter from Indigenous Mazatec anarchist Miguel Peralta to his community of Eloxochitlán de Flores Magón to mark 101 years since the assassination of Ricardo Flores Magón and the ongoing struggle against political imprisonment and persecution in the community (November 2023).

get out from behind the prison walls. I'm very happy to know that you are both in the community with your loved ones.

I am with you all from a distance. The forced detachment from my territory has implied a certain uprooting, forcing me to distance myself from things that I wanted to do in my community. To stop reproducing these community practices sometimes makes me lose sleep. Yet, there is also a bond that is very deeply rooted because that is where I was born.

Exile from one's community doesn't necessarily imply moving away from what you believe in. Living beneath political persecution, there is always anguish and fear. You walk, run, and stumble in the night, but you get up and continue advancing with cautious steps, watching out for the security of your accomplices.

I hope that all the imprisoned compas are soon free, and that the persecuted can return home so that once again their families are united.

Greetings to the compas of the independent media who are always giving it their all. Also, to the compa Luis Olvera Maldonado, and Doña Fili. We have some pulques pending. A warm embrace.

Down with the prison walls!

Freedom for Alfredo Bolaños, Fernando Gavito, Francisco Duran, Marcelino Miramon and Paul Reyes!

Freedom without restrictions for Jaime and Herminio!

Freedom for Jorge Esquivel!

Freedom for Karla and Magda!

Freedom for Alfredo Cospito, Mónica and Francisco!

Freedom for all political prisoners!

Miguel Peralta

12) Letter from Miguel Peralta to Anarchist Prisoner Jorge “Yorch” Esquivel

Yorch, out here it would seem that you haven't been imprisoned for too long, yet you've been isolated from us for more than 346 days. Everyone assimilates to time in different ways. There on the inside, in those places that are just so absurd, time is paused, it moves very slow. Sometimes you hope that the day ends as soon as possible because as they say, monotony reigns. You only perceive the changing of the day because you are present for roll call, or because the compas arrive

Letter from Miguel Peralta to anarchist prisoner Jorge “Yorch” Esquivel. Yorch is a beloved compañero from the punk and anarchist community in Mexico City, currently imprisoned in the Reclusorio Oriente on fabricated charges (November 2023).

for a visit, because the kitchen is calling, or because work is calling too.

I hope you can smile a little. It is not easy. In spite of the situation, don't give pleasure to the asshole prison guards, to those who target you. Don't let the walls squeeze your heart. Never be bitter compa, very soon you will be free embracing the compas.

We are always thinking of you. I send you a prolonged embrace. When you are lying down thinking, looking at the walls or ceilings, I hope that embrace arrives and fills you with joy. In those moments it is proven once again that solidarity does magic, it roams the corridors, lashes at the bars, and opens the locks.

Down with the prison walls.

Miguel



13) “Flee or a Half-Century”

When I’m lying in bed
loneliness pulls me to the window
A firefly shuts off the diaphragm
My memory tears at my soul.

The moon illuminates me
with the rage that inundates me
Sometimes overwhelmed
I look for a path in the twilight.

I breathe and sleep with insecurity
I wake up but you are not there
I walk with your eyes in the darkness
The silence colludes in the attack.

Shared silences
reasssuming lively beings
Dreams chase me
and raise my fists with winks.

14) Writing of Miguel Peralta for the 2024 Anti-Prison Calendar

In prison, work is regularly exploitation in its purest sense. The prison in Cuicatlán is no exception. The majority of the prisoners work for a boss on the inside who might pay them with drugs and a boss on the outside who provides the material.

The prices and the forms of pay are always agreed upon between the director of the prison and the bosses, as the director gets a percentage for every handcraft made.

The principal work inside the prison is the creation of bags made from recycled plastic, and those bags are the most widely sold outside the prison. Prisoners also make soccer balls, there is a carpentry workshop, some make handcrafts from thread like purses and wallets, and also wallets made from the packaging of other products.

In my case, I didn't believe in those forms of work. Beyond the blatant exploitation, those who truly made money were those who didn't do anything, the prison system of course.

I decided to learn to make hammocks. A compañero had the patience to teach me and share with me his

Reflection from Miguel Peralta on work in prison for the 2024 anti-prison calendar (November 2023).

knowledge. Weaving hammocks made me feel accompanied and free. I weaved with cotton thread, and with another called polypropylene. I weaved my dreams. My freedom was tied in each knot, in a diamond shape, a rainbow, or a braid. I liked to mix lots of colors because it gave life to the prison. I was fed up with gray and beige.

The tools that I used were a wooden frame and needles that I made from pieces of plastic chairs, prison material that I recycled.

In order to be more self-organized inside prison, solidarity is fundamental both in bringing in the material but also in selling the products. And well, the compas came up with many different ways to sell them: in raffles, parties, markets, spaces or cooperatives where there was support.

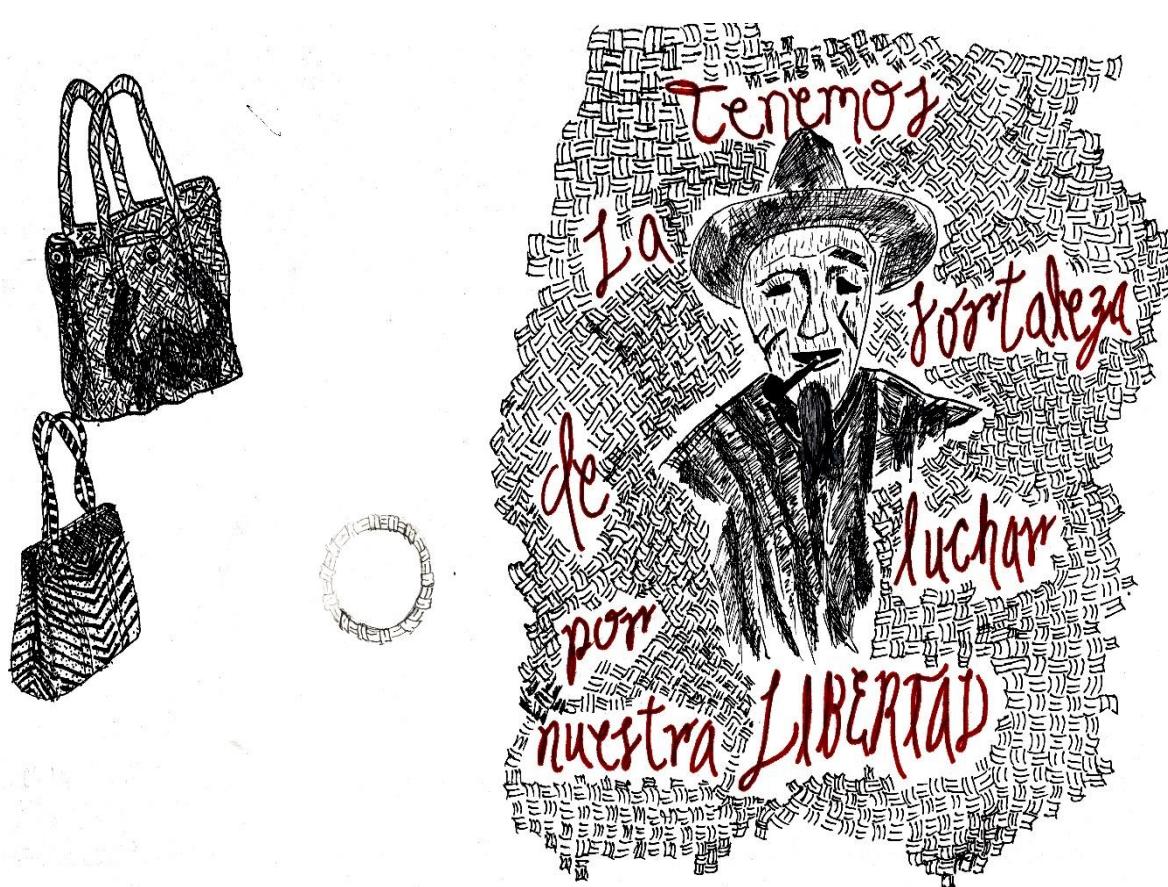
The majority of the prisoners asked me why I didn't work making bags because it was with that that they made a little bit of money. "But at what cost," I always responded to them.

At that time, I also learned to crochet purses and wallets.

With the arrival of other prisoners from a prison that had closed things began to change a little. Together we began to organize so that the prices were more just, and so that the material could be brought into the

prison. In that way, those who wanted to work for themselves could do so, not depending on a boss.

On occasions it was difficult to get the material, because it had to be bought in from far away. It was also difficult at times to sell our products. Yet in the end, we managed to organize ourselves, and with support from the outside, we were able to cover part of our expenses inside the prison.



15) Solidarity with Miguel Peralta and Eloxochitlán de Flores Magón

Nine years have passed since a violent sociopolitical conflict came to a head in Eloxochitlán de Flores Magón, Oaxaca. As individuals, for thirteen years we have accompanied the community, at that time walking alongside the community assembly, and today in affinity as the Support Group in Solidarity with Miguel Peralta.

The conflict in Eloxochitlán de Flores Magón, active since 2010, entered a critical stage of political and legal repression after December 14, 2014. From that date forward, the Zepeda Lagunas cacique family has continued with a campaign of lies, smears, and defamation against individuals and families who have opposed the plunder of the natural resources of their community, and the disappearance of their communitarian forms of organization. For many of them, their struggle has led to unjust persecution and imprisonment; a consequence of the thirst for revenge

Statement from the Support Group in Solidarity with Miguel Peralta to mark nine years since the attack on the community assembly of Eloxochitlán de Flores Magón, and the subsequent state repression, political imprisonment, and persecution carried out against the community (December 2023).

and power with which Manuel Zepeda Cortes and Elisa Zepeda Lagunas have conducted themselves for these nine years.

One of these families is that of Miguel Peralta Betanzos. In 2012, Pedro Peralta (Miguel's father) was detained and imprisoned for three years, a result of another crime fabricated by the Zepeda Lagunas cacique group. He was tortured during his detention. To this date his legal process is still open, and the complaint he filed against the torture committed by the then municipal president and municipal police was never taken up.

In the legal case 02/2015, along with Miguel, his mother (Martha Betanzos), one of his brothers, his uncles, cousins, and people very close to them are among the 34 accused. The majority of them have been released little by little via different legal rulings.



However, the case of Miguel continues. He was arbitrarily detained days before an appeal granted him his definite freedom. Since 2015, he has faced the same process of his other compañeros; cases plagued by torture, falsehoods and legal irregularities, court delays and rulings that always favor Elisa Zepeda.

Miguel Peralta has already been sentenced twice to 50 years in prison. His legal situation is still not resolved. He is currently being politically persecuted, and has a warrant out for his arrest. Like his compañeros, he continues to be subjected to a legal process fabricated and controlled by Elisa Zepeda.

Miguel is waiting for the Supreme Court to take up his case and review an appeal filed by his lawyers which could return to him his freedom and set a very important precedent for his compañeros.

We must not leave aside that what happened in Eloxochitlán de Flores Magón in 2014 is political. It was then transferred to the legal sphere. The absolute and unconditional freedom of all of the prisoners and persecuted will continue to be wrested from the state via political struggle. It is clear who the adversaries are.

We are sailing in the same ocean with different ships, and it depends on all of us so as to arrive to a good port.

Today we again demand immediate freedom for all the politically imprisoned and persecuted of Eloxoxtlán de Flores Magón.

Support Group in Solidarity with Miguel Peralta



Miguel
Peralta...



¡Libertad!

Peralta 02-19-22

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